778 the patron saint of the village, who is called 'Sheikh' or 'Wali' or 'Sidi' So-and-So.

The monument usually stands outside the built-up area, often close to a well or a canal and shaded by trees, which are themselves the objects of veneration. It consists as a rule of a cubical building about twenty feet square, topped by a dome (*qubba*), and whitewashed all over. The sheikh's body does not always lie within. There may be only [782] an empty tomb surrounded by palm branches, candles, shreds of cloth, bits of hair, and harvest offerings. The caretaker of the tomb is maintained by the community, or by the income of a pious foundation (*waqf*). His post is often hereditary.

796 The day of the *mulid*, or anniversary of the holy man, 527 is a great holiday for the villagers. All of them make their way to the holy spot and go through the traditional ceremonies — dances, circuit of the tomb, and incantations (50).

764 The resting-place of the dead is some distance from the homes of the living. The cemetery is always a piece of waste land, unfit for cultivation, on the débris of an abandoned village (*tell* or *kom*), or on the sand below the cliffs at the desert edge. Sometimes, as at Minia, it lies on the other side of the Nile. The village of the dead is made up of separate tombs packed closely one against the other. They may be rectangular cemented blocks with pillars at head and foot, or simply mounds sprinkled all over with white pebbles or marked by two rough stones or a couple of vertical palm branches which are renewed every year. There are no in- [769] scriptions and no flowers, but every family knows where its dead are buried, and comes to visit them on the first day of the Great Bairam, when the whole village goes off to the cemetery to honour the dead and to feast and make holiday [527] over their tombs. On that day the village is as empty and deserted as it is in October, when everyone has gone out to pick the cotton.

361 It is not yet time for us to go inside the village. In 312 artists' pictures of Egyptian villages there is always a pool 311 to reflect the dull mass of houses with its coronet of trees. In reality this pool is a large greenish pond of stagnant 316 water, as poisonous as it is picturesque. Nearly every village has one, almost out of necessity. To build houses, make bricks, engineer a watercourse or strengthen a dyke, local

material is used, that is to say the nearest available earth. Thus large holes have been created, which have been dug deeper and wider, and have then filled up with water. These are the *birkas* or village ponds, which serve as drinking-troughs for animals, as swimming-pools for children, and sometimes as sources of water for the housewife.

The Government has had fifty-odd of these hotbeds of disease filled in, not without meeting opposition from the fellaheen, whose habits and customs have thus been disturbed. Eighteen such ponds needed 10,000 cubic metres of earth.

Not far from the *birka*, still outside the village, is the *gurn*, or winnowing and threshing-floor. This is a flat patch of ground covered with cow-dung and earth, which has been levelled and trodden down. Its size is proportionate to the number of families that use it. The *gurn* is common property, and nobody can appropriate it. It is big enough for ten groups to work at a time, until all have winnowed their corn. It also serves as a public square for meetings, though often an adjacent piece of waste ground supplements it for this purpose. Not far away can be seen a great rubbish heap made of dirt, dung and carrion. This heap would overtop the houses, if the dogs and birds of prey did not come regularly to reduce it, and if the fellaheen did not take manure from it. It would be an even greater danger to public health than the *birka*, if the sun did not disinfect it.

Still outside the village, particularly in the Fayum and in Middle Egypt, there may be square towers, as much as thirty feet high, banded in black and white. Their heavy base, seven yards by four, gives them the appearance of forts, but they are in fact pigeon-cotes. You can see them assailed, at sunset, each by a cloud of from fifteen to twenty thousand pigeons coming back to roost after feeding among the fields. The construction of these "houses", requiring an outlay of from L.E. 200 to L.E. 300 each, is a specialised trade. It is beyond the means of our fellaheen, and can be undertaken only by an *omda* or big landowner. In the South a pigeon-cote is often built on a corner of the rooftop, thus raising the skyline of the village; but as a rule these houses with pigeon-cotes, whether built-on or independent, do not form part of the village itself. They stand apart, and can be distinguished by their extra storey, their more pretentious appearance, and their gardens. Such are the owner's villa on an *ezba*, or